

8.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND AGENCY COORDINATION

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) uses a comprehensive public participation and agency coordination process for alternatives analysis and environmental documentation. This process was initiated at the beginning of the project in December 1994 and has continued throughout project development. The process involves two main elements:

- Community participation by citizen groups and organizations as well as individuals
- Coordination with federal, state, and local governments and agencies and other interested entities

The process assists the study team in identifying community concerns and needs and potential economic, social, and environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. As the study progresses, continuing communication with agencies, governments, and citizens is crucial in developing, refining, evaluating, and eliminating alternatives.

As part of the public communication process, a Notice of Intent to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed project appeared in the Federal Register on January 20, 1995. Appendix M contains a copy of this Notice of Intent (NOI).

8.1 Public Participation

Coordination with communities, groups, and individuals in the project area ensures that the study team is aware of community concerns and needs. Communication with those concerned with the proposed project continues for the duration of the study. The study team uses input from the public to evaluate and refine alternatives.

One component of the process utilized project newsletters. Three different newsletters were distributed to over 25,000 recipients within the area 2 miles north and south of the I-94 project area. Table 8-1 contains information about the newsletters.

Table 8-1
Project Newsletters

Newsletter	Date	Topic
Vol. I	03/96	Project terminology and general project information
Vol. II	06/96	Summary of public involvement meeting
Vol. III	12/97	Description of property acquisition, project goals, and pedestrian circulation

Informational meetings and surveys are used to inform and involve the public. An office specific to the I-94 project is located in downtown Detroit at 400 Renaissance Center, Suite 2260.

Meeting notices and flyers are sent to announce public meetings, and, as necessary, advertisements are placed in general circulation newspapers, *The Michigan Chronicle*, *The Latino Press*, and local media outlets.

8.1.1 Citizens Advisory Committee

Early in project development, a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was established. Representatives of special-interest groups, block clubs, community organizations, churches, school district administration, and business and institutional groups attended four CAC meetings and assisted in disseminating project information to constituencies. The CAC reviewed proposed alternatives and provided input to the study team. Input from the CAC was used in defining and evaluating the alternatives considered in this study.

8.1.2 Public Information Meetings

Eight public information meetings (PIMs) were conducted to present project status and alternatives to interested parties. The meetings were publicized using major local print media, television networks, radio, and specialty minority news networks. Table 8-2 contains meeting dates and locations.

Table 8-2
Public Information Meetings

Date	Location
05/23/95	Crockett Vocational/Technical Center
05/24/95	Crockett Vocational/Technical Center
12/12/95	Cobo Conference and Exhibition Center
04/23/96	Kettering High School
04/24/96	Northwestern High School
04/25/96	Wayne County Community College, Eastern Campus
05/12/99	Kettering High School
05/13/99	Museum of African American History

The following issues were voiced most often at these meetings and have been important in the development of the Practical Alternatives:

- Noise levels and other environmental issues
- Impacts on schools and bus routes
- Displacement of households and businesses
- Role of transit
- Construction schedule

- Increased traffic impacts
- Right-of-way and property appraisals
- Reserved space in median
- Retaining walls/noise barrier walls
- Continuous service drive impacts to neighborhoods
- Speed limits
- Bridge replacements and pedestrian walkways

8.1.3 Neighborhood and Organization Meetings

Approximately 100 meetings were also held with groups that requested them. Meetings were held with local institutions, business associations, neighborhood councils, churches, and other local organizations. In some cases, subsequent meetings were held.

After redesign of the I-94/M-10 interchange, meetings were held with residents of the Fourth Street neighborhood and Research Park Apartments as well as representatives of Wayne State University (WSU) to discuss the changes. Numerous meetings were also held with individual community members and business owners.

Key issues of these meetings were project timelines, funding, property displacements, noise abatement, freeway aesthetics, access during construction, exit and entrance ramp placement, neighborhood development initiatives, emergency vehicle access, compatibility with business, and institutional expansion plans. All comments by community and special groups were considered as part of this study. A representative list of meetings is in Appendix G.

8.1.4 Citizens Impact Survey

A telephone survey was conducted in September 1995 to assess the awareness, usage, impact, and concerns of local residents and businesses in the I-94 project area. The survey contacted more than 450 residents and small business owners. As part of the survey, demographic information and public reaction regarding proposed modifications were collected.

8.1.5 Focus Group Studies

Two project area focus group studies conducted on August 17, 1995, helped to identify critical issues and to design quantitative research data-collection instruments. One focus group consisted of 16 adult residents living within 1 mile of the I-94 project area, and the second focus group consisted of seven small business owners within the same area. The results of the survey are summarized in Appendix C.

8.1.6 Continuing Public Involvement

In response to public comment, a project-related web site was developed. The web site, accessible 24 hours a day, will contain not only a summary of this DEIS, but the entire

document. It will also provide maps of the project, frequently asked questions and answers, a project schedule, and the opportunity to e-mail comments, questions, or concerns regarding the project. Computer simulations of the alternatives, when available, will also be provided to assist the public in understanding elements of the various alternatives.

Following the completion, release, and distribution of this document for review, two public hearings will be held. The hearings will be held at different locations and at different times with the intent of providing convenient times for interested parties to attend. Each hearing will be in an open-house format to allow attendees to study project exhibits and ask questions. Court Reporters will be available to record and document the comments of individuals.

Oral comments from the public hearing and written comments will be reviewed, considered, and evaluated. A Recommended Alternative will be selected by MDOT and FHWA. The selection will be based on public input, benefits to the community and travelers, and evaluation of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the alternatives.

A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be prepared after selection of the Recommended Alternative. The FEIS will document the process of selecting the Recommended Alternative and will contain public comments and any new project information.

8.2 Agency Coordination

In January 1995, coordination letters describing the proposed project were distributed to interested agencies. The purpose of the letters was to inform agencies of the project and to promote involvement in project planning. Appendix J contains reply letters from various agencies.

This DEIS will be distributed to agencies for review and comment. See Chapter 9 for the distribution list.

8.2.1 Interagency Coordination Committee (ICC)

The Interagency Coordination Committee (ICC) was established as a steering committee for the I-94 project. Members of the ICC include representatives of MDOT, the city of Detroit, the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), FHWA, Wayne County, the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), and Macomb County. Over 30 meetings with the ICC have been conducted since December 1994. The alternatives studied in this DEIS were influenced by the ICC, and the ICC continues to provide oversight to the study.

8.2.2 Agency and Local Government Meetings

Since December 1994, numerous meetings have been conducted with public officials and agency representatives to discuss project issues relevant to specific areas of interest and jurisdiction. Meetings included representatives of federal, state, and local agencies and other entities. Many issues were discussed, including improved collaboration between agencies, cooperative planning, technical input, and design aspects of the project. Informational presentations and updates to planning and design of alternatives were provided as needed. Comments from these meetings have been incorporated in the evaluation of the alternatives. A listing of meetings held, dates, and topics discussed is found in Appendix G.